

# Lawmakers hear rural



Chris Marcheso/Fort Morgan Times

## Discussion of development

Audience members listen to a panel, left, made up of, from left, Executive Director of Progressive 15 Cathy Shull, Executive Director of Yuma County Economic Development Corp. Andrea Anderson, Executive Director of Morgan County Economic Development Corp. Jon Becker, State Sen. Greg Brophy, R-Wray, and State Rep. Diane Hoppe, R-Sterling. The panel is presenting ideas and concerns regarding rural economic development to a group of lawmakers, seated at right, from left, Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, R-Colo.; Sen. Wayne Allard, R-Colo.; Deputy to Rural Development Undersecretary Allan Johnson and State Rep. Cory Gardner, R-Yuma.



# concerns

By CHRIS MARCHESO

Times Staff Writer

A lot of aspects go into successful rural economic development, and some of the most crucial include education, new technology, renewable energy and promoting agricultural products.

Sen. Wayne Allard, R-Colo.; Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, R-Colo.; Deputy to Rural Development Undersecretary Allan Johnson and State Rep. Cory Gardner, R-Yuma, heard some of these aspects Thursday at Morgan Community College in the Bloedorn Lecture Hall from a number of local government entities, business entities and elected officials at the Allard Rural Economic Summit.

"I think of the farm, Main Street and the future when I think of rural Colorado," Musgrave said. "I want to see a future for our rural children within our rural communities."

The summit featured three panels of four or five members each that presented the lawmakers with ideas, concerns and suggestions as to what can be done at the federal level to create successful economic development. Most panel members agreed they all needed help.

## Government entities

The first panel was made up of

government entities, and although Clarke Becker, executive director of the Colorado Rural Development Council, said he's not necessarily representing a government entity, he has seen the challenge of job retention in rural Colorado become difficult.

Agriculture is key for Northeast Colorado, Becker said, adding his council can be the eyes and ears for the politicians.

Dr. Michele Haney, president of Morgan Community College, told the politicians that all community colleges in Colorado need federal assistance, and she said Colorado is facing the demise of public higher education.

"Without community colleges, which are crucial to rural economic development, I don't know where you're going to get professionals like nurses, police officers and EMTs," Haney said. "We (community colleges) feel a little under attack."

Joe Hostetler, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development state director, said he has two goals: Increasing economic opportunity and improving the quality of life for rural economies, and he would like to see federal assistance to help achieve these goals.

Genoa Mayor Pat Vice said she is coming from a small town municipal view, and she sees dif-

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## Listening lawmakers

From left, Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, R-Colo.; Sen. Wayne Allard, R-Colo.; Deputy to Rural Development Undersecretary Allan Johnson and State Rep. Cory Gardner, R-Yuma, listen to input from a number of representatives from government entities, business entity groups and elected officials regarding rural economic development Thursday in the Bloedorn Lecture Hall at Morgan Community College.

# Lawmakers

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difficulty in defining what rural is, as the area she lives in is small enough to where it is considered a frontier.

"Communities like mine are at the beginning of rural economic development, and this is exactly when they need your help," Vice said. "The one-size-fits-all idea clearly doesn't fit in rural economic development."

## Business Entity Group/Elected Officials

Executive Director of Progressive 15 Cathy Shull said barriers can't be put in front of people who are seeking economic development.

"We need to be focusing on people, flexibility and a return on investment," Shull said. "The knowledge and passion to become entrepreneurs is there in rural economies."

With Yuma being the number one producer of corn in the state

ties having to share water with the rest of the state.

"I want to stress the importance of the type of people we have here," Hoppe said, indicating people who want to see economic development in the area.

## Business

Lewis Frank, state director of the Farm Security Agency, deals with commodity programs and farm loan programs and wants to see more help to younger farmers starting out.

"Out of 280 loans we've made for farmers, 98 of them were made to get young farmers and ranchers going," Frank said.

Jay Wisdom, owner of Wisdom Natural Poultry, sells his turkeys and chickens throughout the state and has seen difficulty since he has been farming with sustaining his business.

"To survive you have to keep a home-place environment," Wisdom said. "But I'd like to see more loans made available for

ing more than \$26 million in loan and grant funding to several Northeast Colorado entities, including \$24.5 million to finance construction of a new hospital in Yuma.

The 12-bed critical access replacement hospital will be constructed to serve Yuma County and the eastern portion of Washington County. Throughout the past several years, the current 22-bed hospital has seen an increase in use and additional space for outpatient services, patient rooms, growth in individual departments, surgical patient preparation and recovery, and building system updates are needed.

The USDA Rural Development department, under the Community Facilities Program, will provide a \$7 million direct loan and a \$17.5 million loan guarantee for the project. Guaranteed community facilities loans are available to develop essential community facilities in areas and towns of up to 50,000